Braiding tradition reflects resilience

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor

The Organization of Latin American Students hosted a ribbon braids event on Wednesday April 22 in the Multicultural Center in the Adanti Student Center, inviting students to learn about the cultural significance of "trenzas con listones".

The event, held from 2:30–3:30 p.m., centered on a traditional hairstyle rooted in Indigenous Mesoamerican cultures, where colorful ribbons are woven into braids.

"I really wanted to show people how it's part of the Indigenous culture in Mexico and what it means to us, not just something stereotypical," business information systems major Catalina Espinosa, a junior and treasurer of OLAS, said.

Students gathered around as organizers demonstrated braiding techniques and helped attendees weave ribbons into their hair.

Organizers said the idea for the program came from a desire to represent Mexican traditions more authentically on campus.

By introducing ribbon braiding, they aimed to create a space where students could engage with a practice that carries both cultural and historical significance.

The hairstyle, traditionally used to keep hair neat, has evolved into a symbol of identity and pride in many communities.

In recent years, it has also been embraced as a visible form of cultural expression, particularly among younger generations who are reclaiming and redefining traditional practices.

Organizers said the timing of the event also reflects a broader cultural and political context.

Ribbon braids have recently gained visibility as a form of expression tied to identity and resistance.

"It's important right now because people are braiding ribbons in their hair, especially in California, to show resistance against ICE in a peaceful way," Espinosa said.

By connecting a traditional practice to contemporary issues, the event created space for students to explore how cultural expression can intersect with activism.

Attendees not only learned a new skill but also gained insight into how traditions evolve over time while maintaining their roots.

Some students asked questions about the origins of the style, while others focused on mastering the technique.

Organizers offered guidance and ensured that everyone who wanted to participate had the opportunity to do so.

Events like this also serve as an entry point for students who may not be familiar with OLAS or its mission.

By offering interactive programming, the organization continues to create spaces where cultural learning feels approachable and engaging.

Organizers added that events like this are designed to be accessible, allowing students from all backgrounds to engage with Latin American cultures in a meaningful way.

Beyond cultural education, the event also highlighted the role of student organizations in fostering connections on campus.

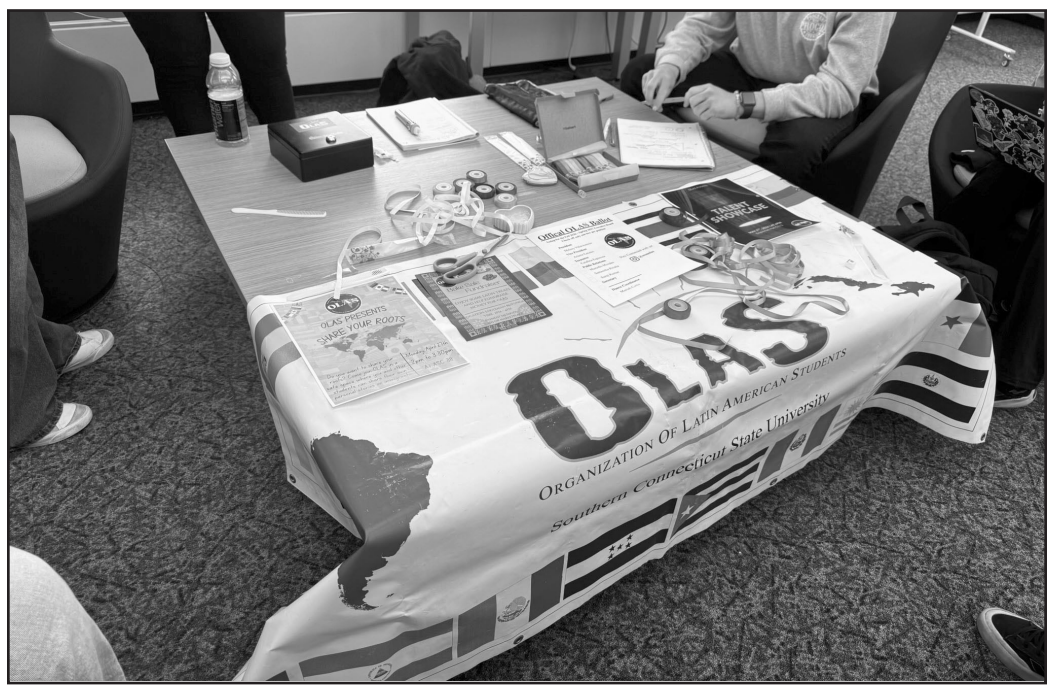
Through simple interactions, attendees were able to form connections that extended beyond the event itself.

"Just now, I was braiding a girl's hair, and we just had small talk, and it overall builds a great community," Espinosa said.



PHOTOS | VALENTINA TORO

Students gathered around a table and engaged in conversation during the event.



Braiding supplies and flyers for upcoming events sit on a table for the event.

Film festival amplifies cultural voices

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor
By Hannah Graham
Copy editor

Films from across Latin America and Indigenous communities took center stage at the university during the 16th Annual Latino and Native American Film Festival.

Hosted from April 20 through April 24, the festival brought together students, faculty and community members to experience films that highlighted cultures, histories and perspectives often underrepresented in mainstream media.

"I think it's a great opportunity for students to expand their horizons and learn about Latino and Native American cultures," biology major Melany Villavicencio, a junior and president of OLAS, said.

The event created a space for storytelling that reflected a wide range of identities across the Americas.

The festival featured different films from multiple countries, exposing audiences to stories that are not always accessible through traditional platforms, bringing awareness and visibility.

For many attendees, it offered a rare chance to watch films in different languages and gain insight into different cultures and countries.

Screenings included Spanish-language films from different Latin American countries and stories centered on Indigenous experiences, offering audiences exposure to narratives rarely seen in popular entertainment.

The purpose of the festival, organizers said, was to create a space for cultural storytelling while educating students about communities that are often overlooked.

By featuring films from different countries and backgrounds, the event aimed to challenge limited representations and broaden students' understanding of identity across the Americas.

"It's really hard to find movies and TV shows in Spanish sometimes, even though we all watch TV," Villavicencio said. "This gives students a chance to experience those stories and perspectives."

The films showcased a range of themes, including cultural identity, history and lived experiences within Latino and Indigenous communities.

Many of the stories focused on personal narratives, allowing viewers to connect with characters and situations that reflect real-world challenges and traditions.

"It's not just a film festival," Carlos Torre, a professor in the education department, said. "It is a way of seeing cultures, people and languages that are not usually included in the media."

Organizers said the event also served as an educational tool, helping attendees learn beyond what is typically covered in classrooms.

While some cultural topics may be briefly introduced in academic settings, the films provided a deeper, more personal look at those histories and experiences.

"I think it educates students immensely," Villavicencio said. "There are things about Indigenous culture that we don't really learn in depth, and this gives people the opportunity to understand that history."

Torre said the festival plays an important role in expanding how students define America, encouraging them to recognize the diversity of cultures that exist across the continent rather than focusing solely on the United States.

Organizers added that the exposure to different languages and cultural backgrounds helps foster a deeper understanding of identity and belonging across the Americas.

"It is to educate people on what America really is," Torre said. "The United States is a small part of America. America goes from Argentina all the way to Canada and everything in between."

Owls Decide: Wii or Nintendo Switch?

By Valentina Toro
Features Editor



PHOTOS | LILY RAND

Wii because it's fun; you can play a lot of sports.
-Nursing major Ivana Abarca, a freshman



Wii: I feel like it's just more fun. I grew up playing games on it.
-Elementary education major Valerie Miciak, a freshman



Nintendo Switch because it just has better games.
-Psychology major Marcus Silva, a junior



Nintendo Switch because you can carry it around.
-Healthcare studies major Isabella Leite, a sophomore



Nintendo Switch: it's a newer console, and it has better games.
-Special-elementary education collaborative major Katie Falasco, a senior



Switch because you can switch it up.
-Political science major William Moroz, a senior